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News Releases-

Release No. 0017.94

Steve Kinsella 202 720-4623

Tom Amontree 202 720-4623

USDA TO MOVE TIMBER SALES FORWARD

WASHINGTON, Feb. 14--Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Jim Lyons announced that the Department will offer for sale 31 million board feet of timber from 24 separate timber sales in Oregon, Washington and California, if the Department of Justice is successful in an application for modification of the injunction imposed by U.S. Western District Judge William Dwyer.

The decision to move these sales forward is the result of an agreement reached last October between the Clinton Administration and twelve environmental groups involved in a lawsuit against the government. The legal action currently bars any new sales in northern spotted owl habitat.

"These 24 timber sales clearly demonstrate that we have reached a new day in northwest forest management," Lyons said. "We have a solid agreement that reflects a good faith effort by the Administration and the environmental community to end the gridlock and move forward with a stable, rational timber program. Although this is not a large volume of timber compared to historical levels, it is tangible evidence that we have finally begun to work together."

Under the terms of the agreement, the environmental groups will not oppose a request to Dwyer to release the sales from court injunction if they are consistent with the preferred alternative in the President's forest management plan and with existing environmental laws such as the Endangered Species Act.

The 24 timber sales represent a portion of 54 sales identified in last October's agreement. Environmental analysis and consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have been completed for all 24 sales and each has been modified to meet the stipulations of the agreement. The sales will be implemented as soon as is feasible if the injunction is modified by the court.



Release No. 0118.94

Mary Dixon (202) 720-4623

Johna Pierce (202) 720-1691

WATKINS NAMED TO FOOD AND CONSUMER SERVICES POST AT USDA

WASHINGTON, Feb. 14--Shirley Robinson Watkins, with extensive school nutrition experience, has been named as deputy assistant secretary of agriculture for food and consumer services, Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy announced today.

As deputy assistant secretary for food and consumer services, Watkins will help in policy and program development for USDA's Food and Nutrition Service, the Human Nutrition Information Service, and the Office of the Consumer Advisor.

"Shirley Watkins brings a wealth of experience to the Department in education and in management. She has front-line expertise in emphasizing quality service as well as parent and community involvement in nutrition programs," Espy said. "And we will put that expertise to good use as we reinvent our food assistance and nutrition programs."

Before joining USDA, Watkins served as director of food and nutrition services for Memphis City Schools. During her tenure, the nutrition program was recognized nationally for its emphasis on quality service, training, nutrition education, and parental and community involvement.

From 1969 to 1976, Watkins was a food service supervisor for Memphis City Schools. During the 1960's, she taught fourth grade and junior high school home economics; and from 1960 to 1962, she served as a home demonstration agent with the University of Arkansas Extension Service.

Watkins is a member of numerous professional organizations, and has served as president of the 65,000-member American School Food Service Association and of the Memphis State Chapter of Phi Delta Kappa. She also served as 1992 chair of the International Food Manufacturers' Association Gold and Silver Plate Society, which recognizes the nation's outstanding operators in the food service industry. She has received many awards and recognition for her leadership and substantive contributions to issues relating to children and nutrition education.

A native of Hope, Arkansas, Watkins received a B.S. in home economics from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff and a master's degree in administration and supervision from Memphis State University in addition to studying toward a doctoral degree in instructional design.



Release No. 0119.94

Alicia L. Ford (202) 720-8998

Larry Mark (202) 720-5747

USDA PROPOSES REVISING LICENSING PROCEDURES FOR COTTONSEED SAMPLERS

WASHINGTON, Feb. 14--The U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing to revise application procedures for licenses to sample cottonseed for official USDA grading services.

The proposed revision eliminates the bonding requirement and application fees and extends the period of new and renewed licenses from one to five years.

Lon Hatamiya, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said the proposed revision would simplify and reduce the burden of applying for a cottonseed sampler's license, which cottonseed samplers would still be required to obtain.

Sampling equipment and procedures would continue to receive the same level of supervision from AMS Cotton Division personnel, said Hatamiya.

License requirements for cotton samplers were similarly revised several years ago with no adverse affects to USDA's cotton classification program, and this revision would make the requirements for cottonseed samplers consistent with those for cotton samplers, Hatamiya said.

The proposed rule is scheduled for publication in the Feb. 14 Federal Register. Comments postmarked no later than April 15 should be sent to Lee Cliburn, Cotton Division, AMS, USDA, Rm. 2641-So. Bldg., PO Box 96456, Washington, DC, 20090-6456; (202) 720-2145.



Release No. 0120.94

Laura Trivers (703) 305-2039

Johna Pierce (202) 720-1691

CONCERN ABOUT HUNGER IN AMERICA BRINGS MORE THAN 250 PEOPLE TO USDA FORUM

WASHINGTON, Feb. 14--More than 250 people interested in finding solutions to the problem of hunger in their communities in the South West participated today in a USDA-sponsored regional hunger forum.

Assistant Secretary for Food and Consumer Services Ellen Haas and U.S. Rep. Kika de la Garza presided at the forum in Welasco, Tex.

Haas stressed the commitment of the Clinton Administration to helping end hunger in America. "The President's budget -- just last week delivered to Congress -- reflects that commitment, calling for an increase of nearly \$2 billion for USDA's food assistance programs."

Haas praised her co-chair, de la Garza, for his tireless work to fight hunger, especially his leadership in the passage of the Mickey Leland Hunger Relief Act. At de la Garza's request, the proceedings of the regional hunger forum were dedicated to former Rep. Mickey Leland, who died in a plane crash in .

de la Garza said, "There is a hunger problem in our country. And there is a hunger problem here in south Texas. It comes in many forms and many faces. The homeless. The unemployed and underemployed. The undereducated and uninformed. The migrant workers. The new immigrants. Our elderly and our children."

One of those children, a 17-year-old Texas high school student whose family receives food stamps, said, "When you're hungry, you can think of nothing else." The student, Janie Mendez testified about her science and nutrition class at school. Mendez said that because of that class, she can now help her parents shop for food, carefully checking the nutrition labels for serving size, fat, cholesterol, and sodium information.

Dr. Ramiro Casso, vice-chair of the Texas Board of Health, talked about the specific problems of the many people who live in unincorporated communities called colonias. The colonia dwellers of the Rio Grande Valley have an average household yearly income of \$6,800. These colonias often do not have a clean drinking water supply, and almost never do they have a sewage, wastewater, or storm-drainage system.

Sherry Lee, executive director of Second Harvest Road Runner Food Bank in Albuquerque, said, "Our society and our communities cannot begin to effectively conquer crime and violence, illiteracy or numerous health problems until we have eradicated hunger and malnutrition from the lives of all our people living day to day in poverty."

Today's regional hunger forum is the second in a series of four regional USDA hunger forums. The regional forums examine the problems and solutions to hunger in communities and draw a diverse audience including those who experience hunger in their daily lives and those who work to fight hunger as well as farmers and ranchers, community advocates, industry leaders and academics. The first regional forum was in Burlington, Vt. Upcoming forums will be in Kansas City, Mo., and Dayton, Ohio.



Release No. 0121.94
Ben Hardin (309) 681-6597
Maria Bynum (202) 720-2032

BEEF CATTLE WITH TWINNING HERITAGE NOW COMMERCIALY AVAILABLE

CLAY CENTER, Neb. Feb. 15--Commercial cattle producers are a step closer to directly reaping the benefits of a U.S. Department of Agriculture project aimed at increasing production of twins in beef herds.

Under a cooperative marketing agreement with USDA's Agricultural Research Service, American Breeders Service of DeForest, Wis., will sell cattle semen and embryos that carry a predicted breeding value for twinning of at least 40 percent for bulls and 30 percent for cows. The cattle germplasm is from an experimental herd at ARS' Roman L. Hruska U.S. Meat Animal Research Center (MARC) at Clay Center, Neb., site of a 12-year study of cattle twin-ning.

Predicted breeding values are based on records of individual animals and their relatives for twinning and ovulation rates. The MARC experimental herd has an overall predicted breeding value for twinning of about 28 percent. By comparison, cows from most popular breeds such as Hereford and Angus typically produce twins from about 1 percent of their pregnancies. American Breeders Service will sell semen and embryos from up to four bulls and 40 cows with high predicted breeding value for twinning in each of the next five years. The company will compensate ARS based on its sales.

"This agreement allows us to use this vehicle for release of germplasm from our project to the beef cattle industry," said MARC director Dan B. Laster. "Our interest is in getting the germplasm to the industry."

For the past 4 years, MARC has sold young bulls from the twinning project at public auction.

The MARC experimental herd's twinning rate has steadily increased about 2 percentage points annually for the past six years. The ARS researchers expect to ultimately increase the herd's twinning rate to more than 40 percent.

"We believe the time has come to make some of these unique genetic resources available to the beef cattle industry through artificial insemination and embryo transfer," said ARS animal geneticist Keith E. Gregory.

Public auctions of young bulls from the project will continue, Gregory said. The center may also exercise a buy-back option for bulls with the highest breeding value after several years of progeny information has been collected on them. MARC and the original purchasers will share in proceeds from semen sales when the buy-back option is exercised and the bulls are placed in an artificial insemination center.

Most likely to benefit by increased twinning are those cattle breeders who can provide their herds with feeds of high nutritive value as well as extra management and labor, Gregory said.

In return, breeders could reduce their cost to produce a pound of beef by as much as 30 percent since twin calves represent almost twice the usual 70 percent of the cow's body weight "harvested" in a calf.

Approximately 14 breeds are now represented in the twinning herd and each animal's ancestry includes at least three breeds. Breeds used to develop the herd include Holstein, Simmental, Charolais, Brown Swiss, Braunvieh, Pinzgauer, Gelbvieh, Swedish Fresian, Swedish Red and White, Norwegian Red, Shorthorn, Maine-Anjou, Hereford and Angus.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: For details, contact Keith E. Gregory at the Roman L. Hruska U.S. Meat Animal Research Center, Agricultural Research Service, USDA, Clay Center, Neb. 68933. Telephone: (402) 762-4176.

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Release No. 0123.94
Clarence Steinberg (202) 720-6179
Larry Mark (202) 720-3310

USDA PETITIONS FEDERAL APPEALS COURT TO REHEAR ALMOND MARKETING ORDER CASE

WASHINGTON, Feb. 15--The U.S. Department of Justice, on behalf of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, has requested the U.S. Court of Appeals in San Francisco, Calif., to reconsider its decision that the federal almond marketing order's advertising program in the 1980's violated the First Amendment rights of certain almond handlers and shippers.

Lon Hatamiya, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said the government is petitioning the court to review substantial evidence in the case's record that supports the advertising program's constitutionality.

The government filed its motion for reconsideration with the appeals court Feb. 4.

The appeals court issued its original decision Dec. 22, 1993.

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Release No. 0124.94
Robert Feist (202) 720-6789

1994-CROP PEANUTS SUPPORT LEVELS, EXPORT EDIBLE SALES POLICY ANNOUNCED

WASHINGTON, Feb. 15--The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation today announced that the national average support level for 1994 quota peanuts will be \$678.36 per short ton, up \$3.43 from the 1993 crop.

The following provisions were also announced:

--The national average support level for additional peanuts will be \$132.00 per short ton, up \$.91 from the 1993 crop.

--1994 crop additional peanuts owned or controlled by CCC will be sold for export edible use at no less than \$400 per short ton, unchanged from the 1993 crop.

--The marketing assessment for quota and additional peanuts will be 1.1 percent of the quota and additional support rates. One-half the assessment will be charged to growers and one-half to first buyers. Growers will be responsible for payment of both the grower and buyer assessment if they market the peanuts to consumers through wholesale or retail outlets or outside the continental United States. Additional peanuts are those produced over and above a farm's quota.

The statute authorizing the program requires that the national average support level for the 1994 crop of quota peanuts be announced by Feb. 15. It also provides that the average support level shall be equal to the 1993 crop support level plus any increase in the 1993 national average cost of peanut production, excluding changes in land cost. The statute also provides that, in the event of a reduction in the cost of production, the price support level would remain unchanged.

The national average support rate for 1994-crop quota peanuts will be increased one half percent above the 1993 support level, because it has been determined that the applicable costs of producing 1993-crop peanuts were \$3.43 per short ton higher than the costs of producing 1992-crop peanuts.

The price support level for additional peanuts must be set at a level which ensures no loss to CCC from the sale or disposal of peanuts. In determining this level, CCC considers the demand for peanut oil and peanut meal, the expected prices for other vegetable oils and protein meals, and the demand for peanuts in foreign markets. For individual lots of quota and additional peanuts alike, the annual price support levels are subject to quality and other adjustments.



Release No. 0125.94

Alicia L. Ford (202) 720-8998

Larry Mark (202) 720-3310

USDA SEEKS PROPOSALS FOR AMENDING LIME ORDER

WASHINGTON, Feb. 16--The U.S. Department of Agriculture is seeking proposals as to how its Lime Research, Promotion and Consumer Information Order should be changed to reflect amendments Congress made late last year to the authorizing statute.

The amended statute authorizes the order to be changed to:

- revise the definition of the term "lime" in order to cover seedless rather than seeded limes;
- increase the exemption level from 35,000 pounds per year to 200,000;
- require the initial referendum to be conducted no later than 30 months after assessments begin;
- reduce the size of the lime board from 11 members to 7; and
- reduce the number of producer members on the board from 7 to 3.

When submitting proposals, interested persons and organizations must include the following:

- the proposed amendment language to the order;
- a separate description of the provisions of the proposed amendments;
- an explanation of the nature and purpose of the proposed amendments;
- identification of the sections of the order that would be amended; and
- any other pertinent information concerning the proposal that would assist in the process of implementing the amended act.

Proposals should be sent in triplicate to the Docket Clerk, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, Rm. 2535-So. Bldg., P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456. They must be received by March 15.

Additional information can be obtained from Richard Schultz at the same address, tel. (202) 720-5976.

The Lime Research, Promotion and Consumer Information Order is authorized under the Lime Research, Promotion and Consumer Information Act of 1990, as amended.



Release No. 0126.94
Kendra Pratt (301)436-4898
Larry Mark (202)720-3310

USDA WARNS CONSUMERS OF DISEASE RISKS POSED BY SMUGGLED BIRDS

WASHINGTON, Feb. 16--Potential owners of exotic species of birds should make sure that they do not buy smuggled birds that could carry exotic diseases as part of the purchase, according to a U.S. Department of Agriculture official.

"Consumers can play a vital role in assisting federal efforts to protect avian and human health from communicable diseases by making sure the pet birds they select have not been smuggled into the country," said Donald Luchsinger, acting deputy administrator of veterinary services in USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

"The most commonly smuggled birds are the hookbilled varieties, such as Amazon parrots, which unfortunately have become known as 'time bombs of disease' once they arrive illegally in the United States," Luchsinger

Luchsinger said smuggled birds are compared to time bombs because they often carry communicable diseases without showing signs of infection. One such exotic disease of concern to USDA veterinarians is velogenic viscerotropic Newcastle disease, more commonly known as exotic Newcastle disease. The exotic Newcastle disease virus is deadly to all birds and would be a major problem for the poultry industry if it were to become established in the United States.

Hookbilled birds with exotic Newcastle disease may show signs of neurological disorder, such as drooping wings or lack of coordination. However, poultry infected with this disease may not show any signs of being sick before they suddenly die. Affected poultry could also have decreased egg production and diarrhea. This virus does not cause foodborne illness in people eating poultry meat or eggs, but it can cause transitory eye inflammations in people who handle infected birds.

Smuggled birds also can carry the bacteria that transmits the disease psittacosis, also called ornithosis. Because birds have adapted to this disease and show no signs of illness, they act as "healthy carriers," and can spread the bacteria through their contaminated droppings. People can also inhale the bacteria if the organisms become airborne in manure dust.

This infectious disease can cause healthy adults to suffer from pneumonic symptoms and can affect the elderly, the young or people with weakened immune symptoms much more seriously. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that 53 people were diagnosed with psittacosis in the United States in 1993. Since the disease is usually mild, many cases of ornithosis may not be diagnosed.

Another disease that smuggled birds could carry into the country is *Salmonella enteritidis* phage-type 4, a highly virulent type of the salmonella bacterium that causes major human and animal health problems in the foreign countries where it exists. Unlike types of salmonella bacteria commonly found in the United States that generally do not cause significant avian illness, the phage-type 4 strain can cause mortality in poultry flocks in addition to being a source of human outbreaks of foodborne illness.

"We require all birds imported from other countries to be quarantined and tested for 30 days at a USDA-approved bird import facility to reduce the risk of communicable diseases entering the United States," Luchsinger said.

Beyond the health risks to humans and other birds, the illegal trade in smuggled birds has reduced the numbers of rare species of birds found in tropical areas. Some of the species of birds smuggled into the country are endangered or threatened species that federal agencies are trying to conserve. As of Oct. 22, 1993, the importation of most endangered or threatened species of birds was prohibited by the Wildbird Conservation Act of 1992.

"Consumers can discourage illegal trafficking in tropical birds by making sure any bird they intend to purchase comes from a legitimate source," Luchsinger said.

An estimated 25,000 birds are smuggled into the United States every year, mostly during their hatching season. Wild birds in Mexico and Central and South America usually hatch from the beginning of January through mid-May, Luchsinger said.

Luchsinger recommended that bird buyers take the following precautions to help stop the importation of smuggled birds:

- Deal only with reputable pet shops or wholesale dealers who are well established in the bird business. Avoid birds sold on the street by independent vendors.

- Be suspicious of "bargain" birds and be wary of those advertised at rock-bottom prices.

- Check all hookbilled birds for a circular stainless-steel USDA-approved legband that is always engraved with three letters and three numbers.

- Frequent bird buyers or dealers should consult with a veterinarian who is knowledgeable about pet birds.

- Report any suspicious activities involving birds to the USDA's "Smuggled Bird Hotline" at (301) 436-8073.



Release No. 0127.94

Alicia L. Ford (202) 720-8998

Larry Mark (202) 720-3310

USDA SEEKS PROPOSALS FOR AMENDING WATERMELON PLAN

WASHINGTON, Feb. 16--The U.S. Department of Agriculture is seeking proposals as to how its Watermelon Research and Promotion Plan should be changed.

The plan needs to be changed to reflect amendments Congress made late last year to the authorizing statute.

The amended statute authorizes the plan to be changed to:

- eliminate refunds of assessments;
- assess watermelon imports and add one or more importer members to the National Watermelon Promotion Board;
- exempt from assessment importers of less than 150,000 pounds;
- exempt from assessments producers with fewer than 10 acres of watermelons rather than 5 acres;
- cover all 50 states; and
- revise the criteria for determining the eligibility of producers to serve on the board.

When submitting proposals, interested persons and organizations must include the following:

- the proposed amendment language to the plan;
- a separate description of the provisions of the proposed amendments;
 - an explanation of the nature and purpose of the proposed amendments;
 - identification of the sections of the plan that would be amended; and
 - any other pertinent information concerning the proposal that would assist in the process of implementing the amended act.

Proposals should be sent in triplicate to the Docket Clerk, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, Rm. 2535-S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456. They must be received by March 15.

Additional information can be obtained from Sonia N. Jimenez at the same address, telephone (202) 720-9916.

The Watermelon Research and Promotion Plan is authorized under the Watermelon Research and Promotion Act, as amended.



Release No. 0128.94
Cynthia A. Eck (301)436-5931
Larry Mark (202)720-3310

USDA DETERMINES MODIFIED COTTON LINES SAFE FOR DEREGULATION

WASHINGTON, Feb. 16--The U.S. Department of Agriculture has ruled it will no longer regulate genetically modified BXN cotton lines or their descendants.

"We have determined that these cotton lines do not present a plant pest risk," said John Payne, acting director of biotechnology, biologics and environmental protection for USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

Calgene, Inc., the Davis, Calif., biotechnology company that developed the BXN cotton lines, sought deregulation in September 1993. APHIS requested public comment on any potential plant pest risk.

APHIS received comments from state officials; universities; cooperative extension services; and business, farmer and professional associations. A majority of the commenters favored granting the petition.

The cotton lines, known commercially as BXN cotton, were genetically engineered to encode an enzyme (nitrilase) that degrades the herbicide bromoxynil, thus conferring specific tolerance to that herbicide. Bromoxynil can be used in integrated pest management programs. The Environmental Protection Agency is considering a request from the maker of bromoxynil to allow the herbicide to be used in this manner.

Calgene submitted information on 15 field trials of the cotton lines in 13 states over five growing seasons. APHIS reviewers analyzed and inspected each of these field trials and found no plant pest risk before, during or after the trials. APHIS revisited this data during the comment period.

Payne stated that APHIS regulators prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) and reached a Finding of No Significant Impact in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

The final rule became effective on Feb. 15 and is scheduled for publication in the Federal Register on Feb. 22.

A record of the determination, the Calgene submission and written comments, and the EA may be inspected at USDA, Room 1141 So. Bldg, 14th Street and Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C., or at USDA, Suite 7 (first floor) Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, Md., between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. A copy of the determination, the Calgene petition and the EA may be obtained by contacting Kay Peterson at (301) 436-7601.



Release No. 0131.94
 Dianne Odland (301) 436-8617
 Johna Pierce (202) 720-1691

USDA RELEASES COST OF FOOD AT HOME FOR DECEMBER

WASHINGTON, Feb. 17--Here is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's monthly update of the weekly cost of food at home for December 1993:

COST OF FOOD AT HOME FOR A WEEK IN DECEMBER 1993

	----- Food plans -----			
	Thrifty	Low-cost	Moderate-cost	Liberal
	(in dollars)			
<hr/>				
Families:				
Family of 2				
(20-50 years)	51.40	65.00	80.10	99.80
Family of 2				
(51 years and over)	48.60	62.50	77.00	92.20
Family of 4 with				
preschool children	74.90	93.70	114.50	141.00
Family of 4 with elementary				
schoolchildren	85.70	110.20	137.60	165.80
<hr/>				
Individuals in				
four-person families:				
Children:				
1-2 years	13.60	16.60	19.40	23.60
3-5 years	14.60	18.00	22.30	26.70
6-8 years	17.80	23.90	29.90	34.80
9-11 years	21.20	27.20	34.90	40.30
Males:				
12-14 years	22.00	30.80	38.30	45.00
15-19 years	22.80	31.70	39.50	45.70
20-50 years	24.50	31.50	39.20	47.60
51 and over	22.20	29.90	36.80	44.10
Females:				
12-19 years	22.20	26.60	32.30	39.00
20-50 years	22.20	27.60	33.60	43.10
51 and over	22.00	26.90	33.20	39.70

USDA's Human Nutrition Information Service computes the cost of food at home for four food plans -- thrifty, low-cost, moderate-cost, and liberal.

Janice Lilja, HNIS's acting administrator, said the plans consist of foods that provide nutritious meals and snacks for a week.

In computing the costs, USDA assumes all food is bought at the store and prepared at home. Costs do not include alcoholic beverages, pet food, soap, cigarettes, paper goods and other nonfood items bought at the store.

"USDA costs are only guides to spending," Lilja said. "Families may spend more or less, depending on such factors as where they buy their food, how carefully they plan and buy, whether some food is produced at home, what foods the family likes, and how much food is prepared at home."

"Most families will find the moderate-cost or low-cost plan suitable," she said. "The thrifty plan, which USDA uses to set the coupon allotment in the food stamp program, is for families who have tighter budgets. Families with unlimited resources might use the liberal plan."

To use the chart to estimate your family's food costs:

-- For members eating all meals at home--or carried from home--use the amounts shown in the chart.

-- For members eating some meals out, deduct 5 percent for each meal eaten away from home from the amount shown for the appropriate family member. Thus, for a person eating lunch out 5 days a week, subtract 25 percent, or one-fourth the cost shown.

-- For guests, add 5 percent of the amount shown for the proper age group for each meal.

Costs in the second part of the chart pertain to individuals in four-person families. If your family has more or less than four, total the "individual" figures and make these adjustments (note: larger families tend to buy and use food more economically than smaller ones):

-- For a one-person family, add 20 percent.

-- For a two-person family, add 10 percent.

-- For a three-person family, add 5 percent.

-- For a five- or six-person family, subtract 5 percent.

-- For a family of seven or more, subtract 10 percent.

Details of the four family food plans are available from the Nutrition Education Division, Human Nutrition Information Service, USDA, Federal Building, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.?



Release No. 0133.94

Alicia L. Ford (202) 720-8998

Larry Mark (202) 720-3310

USDA SEEKS PROPOSALS FOR FRESH CUT FLOWERS AND FRESH CUT GREENS ORDER

WASHINGTON, Feb. 17--The U.S. Department of Agriculture is seeking proposals to establish a national research and promotion order covering certain floral items. The Fresh Cut Flowers and Fresh Cut Greens Promotion and Information Act of 1993 authorizes the secretary of agriculture to establish such an order.

Lon Hatamiya, administrator of the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said the order would be designed to maintain, develop and expand markets for fresh cut flowers and fresh cut greens.

The program would be financed by assessments on handlers whose domestic sales are at least \$750,000 annually. It would be administered by a 25-member council appointed by the secretary of agriculture from nominations originating in the industry.

Any person or group that will be affected by the order may submit a proposal covering the entire order or any portion of the order.

When submitting proposals, interested persons and organizations must include the following:

-- the proposed order language;

-- a description of each proposal;

-- an explanation of the nature and purpose of the proposal;

-- identification of the sections of the order that are proposed; and

-- any other pertinent information concerning the proposal that would assist in the process of implementing the act.

The proposals should be sent in triplicate to the Docket Clerk, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, Rm. 2535-So. Bldg., P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456. They must be received by March 15.

Additional information can be obtained from Arthur Pease at the same address, tel. (202) 720-6930.



Release No. 0134.94
 Brad Fisher (202) 720-4024
 Ron Page (202) 690-4575

USDA ANNOUNCES TWENTY-FIVE NEW RC&D AREAS

WASHINGTON, Feb. 16--Twenty-five new areas in nineteen states are now eligible for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Program.

"The most-important factors to RC&D are the people who live in the RC&D area," said Paul W. Johnson, chief of the Soil Conservation Service--the lead agency in USDA for the RC&D Program. "We're looking forward to assisting them."

RC&D offers technical and financial assistance in natural resource conservation and water management. It also expands economic, cultural, and recreational opportunities. In Michigan, an RC&D project protects a town's wastewater treatment facility from being flooded by a nearby river. An RC&D in Illinois provides limited-resource farmers with programs and services. In Iowa, RC&D helps farmers supplement their incomes by assisting them with fish farming.

RC&D's are led by local citizen's boards or councils composed of people from the private sector and local units of government. They identify local area problems, set goals to solve the problems and then make their solutions a reality.

The new RC&D's are:

Areas	States	Counties
Appalachian-Northeast	Tennessee	Carter, Greene, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi, Washington
Badlands	South Dakota	Bennett, Haakon, Jackson, Shannon
Black Diamond	Virginia	Buchanan, Dickenson, Lee, Russell, Scott, Wise
Cape Fear	North Carolina	Brunswick, Columbus, New Hanover, Pender
Central Florida	Florida	Desoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, Lake, Osceola, Polk, Sumpter
Central Texas	Texas	Bastrop, Bell, Caldwell, Coryell, Falls, Hays, Limestone, McLennon, Milam, Travis, Williamson
Golden Triangle	Georgia	Baker, Calhoun, Decatur, Dougherty, Early, Grady, Miller, Mitchell, Seminole
Imperial Calcasieu	Louisiana	Allen, Beauregard, Calcasieu, Cameron, Jefferson Davis
Iowa Heartland	Iowa	Dallas, Jasper, Polk, Madison, Marion, Warren
KEDC	Alaska	Bethel, Wade, Hampton
Kentucky River	Kentucky	Breathitt, Knott, Lee, Letcher, Owsley, Perry, Powell, Wolfe
Limestone Bluffs	Iowa	Cedar, Clinton, Delaware, Jackson, Jones
Lincoln	Kentucky	Breckinridge, Bullitt, Grayson, Hardin, LaRue, Meade
Mid-State	Pennsylvania	Juniata, Mifflin, Snyder, Union

North Central Mississippi	Mississippi	Benton, DeSoto, Lafayette, Marshall, Panola, Pontotoc, Tate, Tippah, Union
Pee-Dee	South Carolina	Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Marion, Marlboro
South Central	South Dakota	Jones, Mellette, Todd, Tripp
Southwest	Idaho	Ada, Canyon, Elmore, Owyhee, Duck Valley Indian Reservation
Southwest Nebraska	Nebraska	Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Perkins, Red Willow
Timberland	Michigan	Ionia, Kent, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Ottawa
Trinity	California	Trinity
Two Rivers	Georgia	Butts, Chattahoochee, Fayette, Harris, Lamar, Marion, Meriwether, Monroe, Muscogee, Pike, Spalding, Talbot, Troup, Upson
Western Maryland	Maryland	Allegany, Carroll, Frederick, Garrett, Washington
Wes-Tex	Texas	Andrews, Bailey, Cochran, Crosby, Dawson, Floyd, Gaines, Hale, Hockley, Lamb, Lynn, Lubbock, Martin, Midland, Terry, Yaokum
Yukon Flats	Alaska	Yukon-Koyukuk



Release No. 0135.94
 Brian Norris (301) 504-6778
 Maria Bynum (202) 720-5192

NAL COMMITS TO 'ELECTRONIC LIBRARY' GOAL

BELTSVILLE, Md. Feb. 18--On January 1, 1995, the National Agricultural Library (NAL) will take a major step in its commitment to becoming an "elec-tronic library."

"On that date, electronic information becomes the 'preferred medium' for library materials in an all-out push to make NAL's services and its collection available in various electronic formats worldwide," said acting NAL Director Pamela Andre.

Andre said that NAL's ultimate goal is to become "truly a library without walls, where our magnificent collection can be accessed by computer by anyone, anywhere and at anytime."

According to Andre, NAL is making this commitment because of its belief that "the current paper-based information delivery system is inadequate to keep pace with the needs of the modern agriculturalist."

The "electronic library" goal was set in an "Electronic Information Initiative--Phase I" undertaken by NAL as part of a strategic plan to guide NAL operations into the next century. The overall purpose of the initiative is to research, plan and implement a systematic program of managing data in electronic form.

"Phase I was a consideration of the issues associated with NAL's ability to manage electronically created and stored information," Andre said. "The Phase I final report recommends actions NAL must take in order to provide full electronic access to information in the increasingly networked agricul-tural community."

Andre said NAL set the January 1, 1995 goal in a "statement of commitment" contained in the Phase I Final Report. In part, the statement says,

"Increasing ly, information is produced in digitized form, and with recent telecommunications innovations and the Internet, the resources available to the computer literate researcher are expanding exponentially...The NAL is taking the initiative in a systematic program of managing data in electronic form and establishing strategies for collecting, storing and distributing U.S. agricultural information in electronic form."

The statement ends, "To demonstrate its commitment to meeting the challenges of becoming an 'electronic library,' on January 1, 1995, NAL will designate electronic information the preferred medium."

Other steps NAL will take to achieve its electronic library goal are: tie in to electronic networks worldwide to provide "seamless access to information;" shift and add resources to acquire, process and make available electronic data; work closely with other world agencies and libraries to emphasize electronic information; and convert its own publications from print to electronic media.

Details of the NAL effort are contained in "The Electronic Information Initiative: Phase I Final Report: A Key Success Factor in the NAL Strategic Plan." Copies of the report are available via anonymous FTP at

"cliff.nalusda.gov". Copies are also available on 3 1/4" diskette by sending a blank formatted disk to: Head, Document Delivery Services Branch, National Agricultural Library, Room 300, 10301 Baltimore Ave., Beltsville, MD 20705-2351.

"NAL cannot afford to ignore the flood of electronic advances taking place that we can use to serve our users more effectively," Andre said. "With this announcement we have committed ourselves to mastering information technology, to the benefit of U.S. and world agriculture."

NAL is one of three national libraries of the United States, with the Library of Congress and the National Library of Medicine. It is the largest agricultural library in the world.



Release No. 0136.94

Brian Norris (301) 504-6778

Maria Bynum (202) 720-5192

ANDRE NAMED ACTING NAL DIRECTOR

BELTSVILLE, Md. Feb. 18--Pamela Q. J. Andre, who has served in various library management positions with the federal government over a 25-year career, has been named Acting Director of the National Agricultural Library (NAL) replacing Joseph H. Howard who retired on February 3, 1994.

Andre had been NAL's Associate Director for Automation since 1984. During this time she guided NAL's efforts to apply electronic technology to library operations. In particular, she was instrumental in the success of the National Agricultural Text Digitizing Program, in which selected portions of the NAL collection are placed on compact discs and distributed to land-grant university libraries nationwide. She also worked to make NAL services and products available over the Internet.

"As the Associate Director for Automation, Pam has demonstrated her management abilities," said Dean Plowman, USDA's Acting Assistant Secretary for Science and Education. "We are confident that she will serve admirably as Acting Director of NAL."

Prior to joining NAL, Andre held a variety of positions at the Library of Congress (LC). As a computer systems analyst, she worked on the development of LC's bibliographic computer system. She was later the Assistant Chief of the MARC Editorial Division. In 1982, she was named to the management team for the LC Optical Disk Pilot Project.

She has served on the editorial boards of several library-related publications and is a member of the American Library Association and the Library of Congress Network Advisory Committee.

Andre has a master's degree in library science from the University of Maryland. Her articles on library automation have appeared in numerous publications and she is a popular speaker on the uses of new electronic technologies in libraries.

The National Agricultural Library, with over 2.2 million volumes, is the largest agricultural library in the world. With the Library of Congress and the National Library of Medicine, NAL is one of three national libraries of the United States.



Release No. 0137.94

Ali Webb (202) 720-4623

Steve Kinsella (202) 720-4623

ESPY: USDA TO ATTACK LOAN DELINQUENCIES AS PART OF REORGANIZATION

WASHINGTON, Feb. 18--Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy announced today that he is forming a working group designed to continue the Department's aggressive action to address loan delinquencies, fraud, abuse and delinquencies in programs like the Farmers Home Administration.

The group, which will be known as the Loan Resolution Task Force, will be headed by Ron Blackley, who will shift from his current duties as chief of staff to devote full time to this effort. The task force will include representatives from the Department of Agriculture as well as representatives from the Internal Revenue Service, Justice Department, the Office of Management and Budget, the Farm Credit Administration and a private CPA firm. The Loan Resolution Task Force will focus on loans with problems from both the FmHA farm and housing loan portfolios.

Agencies and other individuals from the USDA who will also participate include the Office of the General Counsel and the Under Secretary for Small Community and Rural Development. The current Administrator of the FmHA, Mike Dunn and Tony Williams, the Department's Chief Financial Officer, will co-chair the task force. The office of Inspector General will serve as an ex-officio member.

While recent media attention has dealt with past problems with FmHA farm loans, Espy said the Loan Resolution Task Force will also focus on problems with FmHA housing loans, both in terms of delinquencies and problems in the management of housing financed by FmHA.

Espy said the new task force is part of his reorganization efforts at the Department. The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is proposed to replace the functions currently carried out by a number of agencies including the Farmers Home

Administration's farm lending program and the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service. He said he is forming the group to assure that only loans that do not have serious problems will be transferred to the new FSA or the Rural Housing and Community Development Administration.

"It's important that as part of reorganization we start with a clean slate," said Espy. "We want to zealously collect on delinquent farm loans where the borrowers have not acted in good faith to repay what they owe. This process will also allow the successor agency, the FSA, to focus on the mission of providing supervised credit to deserving and needy farm borrowers."

The Clinton Administration has already taken action to reduce the number of delinquent borrowers, especially those who owe millions of dollars in FmHA loans to the U.S. Treasury. A large loan servicing group has reduced the number of delinquent millionaire accounts from 1,400 to 971. Less than 1 percent of the borrowers owe 40 percent of the outstanding debt.

"This Administration is committed to cleaning up past problems associated with the lending programs at the U.S. Department of Agriculture," said Espy.

Under his reorganization plan, which has already been marked up in the House of Representatives and is scheduled for markup in the Senate next month, Espy has proposed reducing the number of USDA agencies from 43 to 29. The plan proposes to eliminate the current Farmers Home Administration and divide its current lending practices among a newly created Farm Service Agency and Rural Housing and Community Development Administration.

The reorganization plan also proposed to reduce the number of USDA employees by approximately 7,500 and the number of field offices by more than 1,100.



USDA ANNOUNCES 1994 SIGNUP DATES, COMMON PROGRAM PROVISIONS, ESTIMATED DEFICIENCY PAYMENT RATES; 12 EXPERIMENTAL/INDUSTRIAL CROPS AUTHORIZED

WASHINGTON, Feb. 18--Grant Buntrock, executive vice president of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation, today said the signup period for producers wishing to participate in the 1994 production adjustment and price support programs will be March 1 through April 29, at county offices of USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS).

Buntrock also announced the estimated deficiency payment rates for the 1994 wheat, feed grains, ELS cotton, upland cotton and rice programs. These estimated rates are the minimum guaranteed rates for producers who choose the 0-85/92 provisions of the wheat and feed grains programs and the 50-85/92 provisions of the upland cotton and rice programs.

Buntrock said the percent of advance payments made available to producers at signup will be announced later. However; they will not be less than 40 percent for wheat and feed grains and not less than 30 percent for upland cotton and rice. There will be no advance payments for oats since oat prices are expected to average at or above the established target price.

The estimated deficiency payment rates are:

Wheat (\$/bu.)	0.85
Corn (\$/bu.)	0.40
Sorghum (\$/bu.)	0.46
Barley (\$/bu.)	0.52
ELS Cotton (cents/lb.)	16.97
Upland Cotton (cents/lb.)	12.90
Rice (\$/cwt.)	0.94

Buntrock also announced certain common program provisions applicable to the 1994 crops of wheat, feed grains, cotton and rice.

Crops prohibited on 1993 flexible acreage will also be prohibited on 1994 flexible acreage. The prohibited crops are fruits, vegetables, peanuts, tobacco, wild rice, trees, tree crops and nuts.

The Targeted Option Payment provisions will not be implemented.

The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 (the 1993 Act) made changes in the 0-50/92 provisions of the wheat, feed grains, upland cotton and rice programs:

The 1993 Act changed the 0/92 provisions for wheat and feed grains and the 50/92 provisions for upland cotton and rice by increasing the minimum number of acres that must be designated for Conserving Use not for pay from 8 percent of the maximum payment acres to 15 percent.

There are two exceptions to the rule that may allow payment acres to exceed 85 percent of the maximum payment acres:

First, producers who plant minor oilseeds (wheat and feed grain bases only), sesame, crambe and industrial and other crops on this acreage may receive payment on not more than 92 percent of maximum payment acres and, second, producers whose program crop acreage is either prevented from being planted or has reduced yields (failed acreage only) due to disaster-related conditions may receive payments on not more than 92 percent of the maximum payment acres.

The 1993 Act also introduced stricter requirements for use of 50/85 provisions for upland cotton and rice producers. Producers of 1993 and earlier crops of upland cotton and rice could use acreage that was prevented from planting to count towards the 50-percent planting requirement. Upland cotton and rice producers are now required by law to plant at least 50 percent of the maximum payment acres to upland cotton or rice to be able to designate Conserving Use acres for pay and receive payment on up to 85 percent of the maximum payment acres.

Accordingly, a producer who plants less than 50 percent of the maximum payment acres to upland cotton or rice (unless such underplanting is due to a quarantine) will not be able to use the 50/85 provisions of the upland cotton and rice programs, beginning with the 1994 crop. Such a producer, however, will be eligible for deficiency payments on those acres actually planted to upland cotton or rice.

Further operational details on the 0-50/85 provisions will be sent to county ASCS offices soon.

A new feature in this year's program provisions is use of the Secretary's discretionary authority to permit the planting of 12 experimental and industrial crops on acreage otherwise idled under the 0-50/85 provisions of these programs. Buntrock said that the use of this discretionary authority to 12 crops will provide potentially new markets and income opportunities for producers without competing with traditional commodities for feed or food use.

The following industrial and experimental crops, along with their potential uses, may be planted on 0-50/85 acreage: Castor beans (lubricants, nylon); chia (cosmetics); crotalaria (burlap type fibers); cuphea (soap, surficants); guar (cloth, paper manufacturing, explosives); guayule (hypoallergenic latex products); hesperaloe (specialty paper pulp); kenaf (twine, rope, molded car parts, burlap, newsprint); lesquerella (lubricants, cosmetics); meadowfoam (lubricants, waxes, water repellents, leather manufacturing); milkweed (clothing insulation, tissue paper) and plantago ovato (high fiber additive to laxatives).

State ASCS Committees will be given latitude to remove individual crops from this list in their respective states. For instance, in some states milkweed may be considered a noxious weed. However, some areas have expressed interest in milkweed production for its industrial use.

These industrial and experimental crops may also be planted on acreage designated as Acreage Conservation Reserve (ACR) under the upland cotton program. Also, crambe and sesame may be planted on upland cotton ACR. Producers already are allowed to plant sesame and crambe on 0-50/85 acreage. The planting of any of these crops on ACR will not result in any reduction in deficiency payments for producers.



Program Announcements-

Release No. 0122.94

Gene Rosera (202) 720-6734

Charles Hobbs (202) 720-4026

USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET RICE PRICES, MARKETING CERTIFICATE RATES

WASHINGTON, Feb. 15--Under Secretary of Agriculture Eugene Moos today announced the prevailing world market prices of milled rice, loan rate basis, as follows:

--long grain whole kernels:	12.20 cents per pound
--medium grain whole kernels:	11.52 cents per pound
--short grain whole kernels:	11.38 cents per pound
--broken kernels:	6.10 cents per pound

Based upon these milled rice world market prices, loan deficiency payment rates, gains from repaying price support loans at the world market price, and marketing certificate rates are zero.

These announced prices are effective today at 3 p.m. EST. The next scheduled price announcement will be made Feb. 22 at 3 p.m. EST.



Release No. 0132.94
 Janise Zygmunt (202) 720-6734
 Charles Hobbs (202) 720-9045

USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET PRICE AND USER MARKETING CERTIFICATE PAYMENT RATE FOR UPLAND COTTON

WASHINGTON, Feb. 17--Grant Buntrock, executive vice president of USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation, today announced the prevailing world market price, adjusted to U.S. quality and location (adjusted world price or AWP), for Strict Low Middling (SLM) 1-1/16 inch (leaf grade 4, micronaire 3.5-3.6 and 4.3-4.9, strength 24-25 grams per tex) upland cotton (base quality), and the coarse count adjustment (CCA) in effect from 5:00 p.m. today through 3:59 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 24. The user marketing certificate payment rate announced today is in effect from 12:01 a.m. Friday, Feb. 18 through midnight Thursday, Feb. 24.

The Agricultural Act of 1949, as amended, provides that the AWP may be further adjusted if: (a) the AWP is less than 115 percent of the current crop year loan rate for base quality upland cotton, and (b) the Friday through Thursday average price quotation for the lowest-priced U.S. growth as quoted for Middling (M) 1-3/32 inch cotton, C.I.F. northern Europe (USNE price) exceeds the Northern Europe (NE) price. Because this week's calculated AWP is equal to 128 percent of the 1993 upland cotton base quality loan rate, a further adjustment cannot be made.

This week's AWP and coarse count adjustment are determined as follows:

Adjusted World Price	
NE Price	80.86
Adjustments:	
Avg. U.S. spot market location	11.91
SLM 1-1/16 inch cotton	1.50
Avg. U.S. location	0.31
Sum of Adjustments	- 13.72
ADJUSTED WORLD PRICE	67.14 cents/lb.
Coarse Count Adjustment	
NE Price	80.86
NE Coarse Count Price	- 78.05
	2.81
Adjustment to SLM 1-1/32 inch cotton	- 3.20
	- 0.39
COARSE COUNT ADJUSTMENT	0 cents/lb.

Because the AWP is above 52.35 cents per pound--the base quality loan rate for both the 1992 and 1993 marketing years--the loan repayment rate during this period is equal to the loan rate, adjusted for the specific quality and location plus applicable interest and storage charges. The AWP will continue to be used to determine the value of upland cotton that is obtained in exchange for commodity certificates.

Because the AWP is above the 1993-crop loan rate, loan deficiency payments are not available during this period.

The USNE price has exceeded the NE price by more than 1.25 cents per pound for four consecutive weeks and the AWP has not exceeded 130 percent of the 1993 crop year base quality loan rate in any week of the 4-week period. As a result, the user marketing certificate payment rate is 0.19 cents per pound. This rate is applicable during the Friday through Thursday period for bales opened by domestic users and for cotton contracts entered into by exporters for delivery prior to Sept. 30, 1994. Relevant data are summarized below:

Week	For the Friday through Thursday Period Ending	USNE Price	NE Price cents/lb	User Marketing Certificate Payment Rate
1	Jan. 27, 1994	76.20	72.84	2.11
2	Feb. 3, 1994	79.85	77.49	1.11
3	Feb. 10, 1994	81.65	80.03	0.37
4	Feb. 17, 1994	82.30	80.86	0.19

Next week's AWP, CCA and user marketing certificate payment rate will be announced on Thursday, Feb. 24, at 5 p.m.

